Child's Story of American Literature

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erly. But you will forgive this when you hear that he didn't have much time to take. He knew that he was dying of consumption. You will only think what a pity it was that a man who could invent so many thrilling incidents didn't have a chance to write down all that was in his brain. He was actually working on his five novels at once in his plucky race with death!

You know how it is with people who have a great deal to say and little time to say it in. They gallop breathlessly. If they had less to say it wouldn't be so hard to follow them. Brown had so much to say that he wrote stories inside of stories, and, as like as not, stuffed both of them inside a third, in a way you perhaps remember in the "Arabian Nights." The curious thing about him was that persons who can invent so many improbable incidents have not generally the ability to describe actual happenings, little or big. But Brown's stories have something of the same quality as "Gulliver's Travels" and "Robinson Crusoe." They seem put down by a man on the spot, who really observed it all. Brown is the sort of novelist who would have made a first class reporter on a New York paper, where a good reporter always has two things at once in his mind: to be as interesting and as actual as possible.

He placed the scene of all his stories in America, and he used the romantic material of colonial life. This kind of story, it is true, can never be placed in very real surroundings; and his people are not so much Americans as they are the shadowy sort of people such strange things could happen to. Nevertheless, here was another man writing like Treneau—as if America had no less and no more right to speak of herself in literature than any other country had. This should always be the true tone of patriotism. Those epics and those magazines we have been speaking about blustered a great deal. Generally, people who bluster do so to conceal some weakness they are only too conscious of, and the immediate history of Brown's novels illustrates the weakness which was predominant everywhere in America for a great many years to come.

Brown had written to his brother: "The salability of my works will much depend upon their popularity in England." He was right. He had not been nine years trying to establish magazines in America without getting to know the American public very well. Though nothing could have better suited the taste of the time than his exciting stories, and though they were the sort which is always more immediately popular than any other kind, and though Americans had had very few of this kind or of any kind to read, still his books did not become successful at home until Americans heard that England approved of them. And Brown's history was to repeat itself in the case of very many other authors. Perhaps, indeed, this uneasy sort of patriotism is not yet entirely gone from America. There are still many people here who, while they are blusteringly defiant of foreign disapproval, are pathetically pleased when foreigners applaud.

As Max Sees Rossetti

ROSSETTI AND HIS CIRCLE. Drawings by Max Beerbohm. Doubleday, Page & Co.

HERE again is Max the irresponsible and irrepressible, an amiable bull let loose in the china shop of Victorian reputations. For those who remember "The Poet's Corner" no introduction of this book is needed. In "The Poet's Corner" Max ranged as far back as Homer. "Here,' he says, "I haven't so much as shown Rossetti before he passed out of baby clothes into breeches." The trouble with Max is that no one knows just when to take him seriously. That is the penalty of going about the world with your tongue in your cheek. So when in a note preceding these illustrations he says that he considers Byron, Disraeli and Rossetti the three most interesting men that England had in the nineteenth century one is at a loss to decide whether it is a genuine opinion or merely a subtle Maxian whimsicality.